



NEWS

Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D. C. 20554

News Media Information 202 / 418-0500
Internet: <http://www.fcc.gov>
TTY: 1-888-835-5322

This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action.
See MCI v. FCC, 515 F.2d 385 (D.C. Cir. 1974).

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NEWS MEDIA CONTACT:
Mark Wigfield
(202) 418-0253

BROADBAND PLAN “UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY” TO INCREASE ACCESS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Washington, D.C – With only 42% of all people with disabilities in the U.S. reaping the benefits of high-speed Internet services at home, the nation must take advantage of a unique opportunity now to make this critical technology more accessible, said Federal Communications Commission Chairman Julius Genachowski today.

The FCC is preparing to release a National Broadband Plan next week, which includes many recommendations on how to expand the reach and depth of broadband’s benefits to people with disabilities. With broadband technologies, “we have the opportunity to consider accessibility issues relatively early in the deployment process and enable people with disabilities to share fully in the benefits of broadband,” Genachowski said in a speech at a conference co-sponsored by Silicon Flatirons and the American Association of People with Disabilities and the Information Technology and Innovation Foundation at the Washington, D.C. Public Library

“We must make clear that building in accessibility at the design and development stage is cost-effective, and that all of society benefits from the widespread use of accessibility features such as captioning, speech recognition, and speech output,” Genachowski said. “Now is the time to engage in this endeavor in earnest and show that we do indeed believe that this is a big deal, for people with disabilities and for all Americans.”

Working recommendations in the Plan include:

- A government-wide Accessibility Initiative and establishment of a Broadband Accessibility Working Group
- An ongoing Accessibility and Innovation Forum at the FCC for stakeholders to share best practices and collaborate on accessibility solutions
- Action by the FCC, DOJ, and Congress to update accessibility laws and policies and make sure they are enforced.
- Authorization by Congress for limited use of Universal Service Fund for assistive technology users and developers
- Use of TRS funds for broadband services and assistive technology subsidies and for funding additional IP-based services

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The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 directed the FCC to submit a National Broadband Plan to Congress that addresses broadband deployment, adoption, affordability, and the use of broadband to advance solutions to national priorities. More information about development of the National Broadband Plan can be found at www.broadband.gov